

Theology vol 112.

A

MORAL DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

Truth of the Christian Religion;

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION

ON THE

NATURE and FORCE

OF

PROBABLE ARGUMENTS.

First printed in the Year 1660,

And now accurately reprinted

By the EDITOR.

THE SECOND EDITION.

Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστι κεκαλυμμένοι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις
ἔστι κεκαλυμμένοι 2 Cor. iv. 3.

L O N D O N,

Printed for T. CADELL, in *The Strand*.

MDCCLXXVI.

To Vol. 112

This Day is Published,

AN Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church; and in particular concerning the Church of Papal Rome; in Twelve Sermons, preached in Lincoln's-Inn Chapel, at the Lecture of WILLIAM WARBURTON, Lord Bishop of Gloucester. By RICHARD HURD, D. D. now Lord Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, 2 vols. 7s.

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THE
EDITOR'S PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

THE following discourse (a very small part of a great, elaborate work) was written, and published, above a century ago; but will be new, I believe, to most readers. For books, like other things, are abandoned to our caprice; and are called for, or neglected (to the mortification and disgrace of the learned world) as the writers of them chance to be, or not to be, in fashion.

We have, doubtless, many excellent performances on the subject here treated; but *none*, that I know of, within the same compass, equally instructive. There

are some few facts, and testimonies, alledged in the course of the argument, which, on stricter examination, have been found not so pertinent, or considerable, as they were taken to be in the writer's time. But, in general, there is so much truth and sense in this little tract, so much good reasoning, enforced by so exuberant an eloquence, and so sublime a piety, that, if I mistake not, it will afford, to serious minds, a more than common satisfaction.

But who, then, is the AUTHOR of this applauded work?

Reader, if thou art skilled in books, and hast any discernment in the style and composition of great writers, thou wilt not ask: if thou art a plain, unlettered man, it is not needful for thee to know.

Only, read on; and disbelieve, if thou canst, the *truth and divinity of the Christian Religion*.

INTRO-

INTRODUCTION.

ON THE NATURE AND FORCE OF PROBABLE ARGUMENTS.

EVERY probable argument hath in it something of persuasion and proof; and although it cannot produce evidence and entire conviction to a wise and a discerning spirit, yet it can effect all that it ought: and although, if the will list, or if passions rule, the understanding shall be made stubborn against it, and reject it easily; yet, if nothing be put in bar against it, it may bring a man to adhere to it, beyond the evidence.

But, in some cases, there are a whole army of little people, heaps of probable inducements, which the understanding amasses together, and from every side gathers all that can give light and motion to

the article in question ; it draws auxiliaries from every thing, fights with every weapon, and by all means pursues the victory ; it joins line to line, and precept to precept, reason to reason, and reason to authority ; the sayings of wise men with the proverbs of the people ; consent of talkers, and the arguings of disputers ; the nature of the thing, and the reasonableness of its expectations ; the capacities and possibilities of men, and of accidents ; the purposes and designs, the usefulness and rewards ; and by what all agents are and ought to be moved ; customs are mingled with laws ; and decencies, with consideration of profit ; the understanding considers the present state and heap of circumstances, and by prudence weighs every thing in its own balance ; it considers the consequent of the opinion it intends to establish, and well weighs the inconvenience of the contrary. But, from the obscurity and insufficiency of these particulars, there cannot come a perfect light ; if a little black be mingled with white, the product must have something of every influence that can be communicated from its principle,

principle, or material constitution ; and ten thousand millions of *uncertains* cannot make one *certain*.

In this case the understanding comes not to any certainty by the energy of the motives and direct arguments of probability, or by the first effort and impresses of their strength, but by a particular reflexion which it makes upon the heap, and by a secondary "discourfing extracted from the whole ; as being therefore convinced, because it believes it to be impossible that fo many confiderations, that no way confpire either in matter or design, fhould agree in the production of a lie. It is not likely that fo many beams of light fhould iffue from the chambers of heaven for no other reason but to lead us into a precipice. Probable arguments and prudential motives are the great hinges of human actions ; for, as a pope once faid, " It is but a little wit that governs the " world ;" and the uncertainty of arguments is the great caufe of contingency in events. But, as uncertain as moft counfels are, yet all the great tranfactions

of the affairs of the world are resolved 'on and acted by them ; by suspicions and fears and probable apprehensions infinite evils are prevented ; and it is not, therefore, likely to be an error, by which so perpetually so many good things are procured and effected. For it were a disparagement to the wise providence of God, and a lessening the rare œconomy of the Divine Government, that he should permit almost all the world, and all reiglements, the varieties of event, and all the changes of kingdoms, and all counsels and deliberations, to be conducted by moral demonstrations, and to be under the power of probabilities; and yet that these should be deceitful and false. Neither is it to be imagined, that God should permit wise men and good men, that on purpose place their reason in indifference, that abate of their heats and quench their own extravagant fires ; men, that wipe away all clouds and mists from their eyes, that they may see clearly, men, that search as they ought to do, for things that they are bound to find, things that they are commanded to search, and upon which

which even all their interests depend, and yet, enquiring after the end whither they are directed, and by what means it is to be acquired; that these men should be inevitably abused by their own reason, by the best reason they have; and that, when concerning the thing which cannot be demonstrated by proper and physical arguments, yet we are to enter into a persuasion so great, that for the verification of it men must venture their lives and their souls: I say, if this kind of proof be not sufficient to effect all this, and sufficiently to assure such men, and competently to affirm and strengthen such resolutions, salvation and damnation must be by chance; or, which is worse, it must be impossible to be well, but when it cannot choose to be otherwise; and this, I say, is not to be imagined that God will or does permit, since all these intercourses so much concern God's glory, and our eternal interest.

The main events of heaven and hell do in some regards depend, as to us, upon our faith, whose objects are represented with such lights from God and right reason as
are

are sufficient to persuade, not to demonstrate; they are such, which leave something to us of choice and love; and every proposition of Scripture, though it be as *sure*, yet it is not so *evident*, as the principles of geometry; and the Spirit of God effects his purposes with an influence as soft and placid as the warmth of the sun, while a physical demonstration blows hard and high as the north wind; indeed a man must use rudeness, if he does not quit his garment at so loud a call, but we are more willing to part with it, when the sun gently requires us: so is *a moral demonstration*, it is so humane, so persuasive, so complying with the nature and infirmities of man, with the actions of his life and his manner of operation, that it seems to have been created on purpose for the needs and uses of man in this life, for virtue and for hopes, for faith and for charity, to make us to believe by love, and to love by believing; for in heaven they that see and love, cannot choose but love, and see, and comprehend; for it is a reward, and fills all their faculties, and is not possessed by us,
but

but itself possesses us. In this world, where we are to do something ourselves, though all by the grace of God, that which we do of ourselves is nothing else but to work as we ourselves can; which indeed happens to be, in propositions, as it is in the love of God; this cannot fail us, but we may fail of it; and so are the sentences of religion, infallible in themselves, but we may be deceived, while by a fallible way we proceed to infallible notices, for nothing else could indear our labour and our love, our search and our obedience: and therefore this must be sufficient and acceptable, if we do what we can: but then this also will secure our confidence; and in the noises of Christendom, when disputing fellows say, "their brother is damned for not believing
"them," we need not to regard any such noises, if we proceed prudently as we can, and honestly as we ought; probable motives of our understanding are our sufficient conduct, and then we have this warrant, *Brethren, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we peace towards God*^a. And God

^a 1 John iii. 21.

would never have inspired his Church with prudence, or made any such virtue, if the things which were put under the conduct of it, that is, *probabilities*, were not instrumental to the service of God, and to the verification of all its just and proper productions.

Probable arguments are like little stars, every one of which will be useless, as to our conduct and enlightening; but, when they are tied together by order and vicinity, by the finger of God, and the hand of an angel, they make a constellation, and are not only powerful in their influence, but, like a bright angel, to guide and to enlighten our way. And, although the light is not great as the light of the sun or moon, yet mariners sail by their conduct; and, though with trepidation and some danger, yet very regularly they enter into the haven. This heap of probable inducements, is not of power as a mathematical and physical demonstration, which is in discourse as the sun is in heaven, but it makes a milky and a white path, visible enough to walk in securely.

And,

And, next to these tapers of effective reason, drawn from the nature and from the events, and the accidents and the expectations and experiences of things, stands the grandeur of a long and united authority: the understanding thus reasoning, “ That it is not credible, that this thing “ should have escaped the wiser heads of “ all the great personages in the world, “ who stood at the chairs of Princes, or “ sat in the Rulers chair; and should only “ appear to two or three bold, illiterate, “ or vicious persons, ruled by lusts, and “ over-ruled by evil habits.” But in this we have the same security and the same confidence, that timorous persons have in the dark; they are pleased and can see what is and what is not, if there be a candle; but, in the dark, they are less fearful, if they be in company.

This way of arguing some are pleased to call a MORAL DEMONSTRATION; not, that it can make a proposition clear and bright, and quit from clouds and obscurity, as a natural demonstration can; for I may in this case use Aristotle’s saying,

ing, *τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, ἀλλ' ἔσχατος*, " Things of
 " this nature may be very true, but are not
 " very evident ;" but it can produce the
 same effect, that is, it can lead into truth, not
 with as much brightness, but with as much
 certainly and infallibility in the event of
 things. For a man may as prosperously
 and certainly arrive at his journey's end,
 though but conducted by him that went
 the way but once before him, as if he had
 a straight path walled in on both sides ; so
 may we find truth as certainly by probabi-
 lities, as by demonstrations : we are not so
 sure that we find it, but it is oftentimes as
 surely found. And if the heap arrive at
 that which we call a Moral Demonstration,
 it is as certain that no moral demonstration
 can be opposed against it, as that no natural
 demonstration can be brought in contra-
 diction to a natural. For the understand-
 ing cannot call any thing a moral demon-
 stration, till, by considering the particulars
 on both sides, the reasonableness of one,
 and the unreasonableness of the other, with
 a cold scent, and liberty of spirit, and an
 unbiassed will, it hath passed the sentence
 for

for the truth; and since in this case all the opposition is between strength and power on one side, and weakness and pretence on the other, it is impossible that the opposite parts should be demonstrations, or seem so, to the same man. And this appears by this also, that some propositions, which are only proved by a conjugation of probable inducements, have yet obtained as certain and as regular events as a natural demonstration, and are believed *equally, constantly, and perpetually*, by all wise men; and the understanding does regularly receive the same impression, and give the same assent, and for ever draws forth the same conclusions, when it is not abused with differing prejudices and preoccupations, when its liberty and powers are not infeeblled with customs, example, and contrary breeding, while it is not bribed by interest, or hurried away by passion.

Of this I shall choose to give one instance, which, as it is of the greatest concernment in the world in itself, so the gay impieties and bold wits of the world who are witty against none more than God and
 God's

God's wisdom, have made it now to be but too seasonable; and that is, that THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST, OR THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, IS FROM GOD; concerning which I will not now pretend to bring in all the particulars, whereby each part of it can be verified, but, by heaping together such heads of probabilities, which are or may be the cause of an infinite persuasion; and this I had rather choose to do for these reasons:

1. Because many men, excellently learned, have already discoursed largely of the truth of Christianity, and approved, by a direct and close congression with other Religions, by examination of the contrary pretences, refutation of their arguments, answering their objections, and have by direct force so far prevailed, that all the reason of the world appears to stand on the Christian side: and for me to do it now, as there is no just occasion ministered by this argument^b, so neither can it be useful and necessary.

^b Of the *great work*, referred to in the Editor's preface.

2. In

2. In that way of arguing, every man, that is an adversary, can answer one argument, and some can reprove many, and none can prevail singly to possess all the understanding, and to fill all the corners of consideration ; but in a moral demonstration that can be supplied.

3. In the other way, an adversary supposes himself to prevail, when he can answer the arguments singly ; and the discourses, in that method, are like the servants sent singly to gather fruits of the husbandmen, they killed them as fast as they came ; and a man may kill a whole kingdom over, if the opponents come by single persons : but a moral demonstration is like an army, which can lose single persons and yet prevail, but yet cannot be beaten unless it be beaten all.

4. The few little things, that Atheistical persons prate against the holy Jesus and his most excellent Religion, are infinitely outweighed by the multitude and variety of things to be said for it ; and let the others stand (as if they meet with persons that cannot answer them), yet they are sure this

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greater

greater ought to prevail, because it possesses all the corners of reason, and meets with every instance, and complies with the manner of a man, and is fitted to the nature of things, and complies with the will, and persuades the understanding, and is a guard against the tricks of sophisters, and does not only effect its purpose by direct influence, but is secured by reflection upon itself, and does more by its indirect strength, and by a back blow, than by its first operations; and therefore,

This instance, and this way of argument, may be of more use to those persons who cannot so dispute, but that they are apt to be abused by little things, by talkings and imperfect arguings; it may be a defensive against trifling objections, and the impious pratings of the *nequam ingeniosi*, the witty fools, while the men are armed by love and prudence and wise securities to stand with confidence and piety against talkings and intrigues of danger; for by this way best, *Wisdom is justified of all her children.*

A MORAL DEMONSTRATION
OF THE TRUTH OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

THIS discourse, of all the disputables in the world, shall require the fewest things to be granted; even nothing but what was evident; even nothing but the very subject of the question, *viz.* That there was such a man as Jesus Christ; that he pretended such things, and taught such doctrines: for he that will prove these things to be from God, must be allowed that they were from something or other.

But this postulate I do not ask for need, but for order's sake and art; for what the histories of that age reported as a public affair, as one of the most eminent transactions of the world, that which made so much noise, which caused so many changes, which occasioned so many wars, which divided so many hearts, which altered so many families, which procured so many

deaths, which obtained so many laws in favour, and suffered so many rescripts in the disfavour, of itself; that which was not done in a corner, but was thirty-three years and more in acting; which caused so many sects, and was opposed by so much art, and so much power that it might not grow, which filled the world with noise, which effected such great changes in the bodies of men by curing the diseased, and smiting the contumacious or the hypocrites, which drew so many eyes, and filled so many tongues, and employed so many pens, and was the *care* and the *question* of the whole world at that time, and immediately after; that which was consigned by public acts and records of courts, which was in the books of friends and enemies, which came accompanied and remarked with eclipses and stars and prodigies of heaven and earth; that which the Jews even in spite and against their wills confessed, and which the witty adversaries intending to overthrow, could never so much as challenge of want of truth in the matter of fact and story; that which they who are infinitely

infinitely concerned that it should not be believed, or more, that it had never been, do yet only labour to make to appear not to have been Divine: certainly, this thing is so certain that it was, that the defenders of it need not account it a kindness to have it presupposed; for never was any story in the world that had so many degrees of credibility, as the story of the person, life, and death, of Jesus Christ: and if he had not been a true Prophet, yet that he was in the world, and said and did such things, cannot be denied; for even concerning Mahomet we make no question but he was in the world, and led a great part of mankind after him, and what was less proved we infinitely believe: and what all men say, and no man denies, and was notorious in itself, of this we may make further inquiries whether it was all that which it pretended; for that it did make pretences and was in the world, needs no more probation.

But now, whether Jesus Christ was sent from God and delivered the will of God, we are to take accounts from all the things

of the world which were ON him, or ABOUT him, or FROM him.

I.

Considerations respecting the PERSON
of Jesus Christ.

CONSIDER, first, his PERSON: he was foretold by all the Prophets: he, I say, for that appears by the event, and the correspondencies of their sayings to his person: he was described by infallible characteristics, which did fit him, and did never fit any but him; for, when he was born, then was the fulness of time, and the Messiah was expected at the time when Jesus did appear, which gave occasion to many of the godly then to wait for him, and to hope to live till the time of his revelation: and they did so, and with a spirit of Prophecy, which their own nation did confess and honour, glorified God at the revelation: and the most excellent and devout persons that were conspicuous for their piety did then rejoice in him, and confess him; and the expectation of him at that time was

was so public and famous, that it gave occasion to divers impostors to abuse the credulity of the people, in pretending to be the Messias; but not only the predictions of the time, and the perfect Synchronisms, did point him out, but at his birth a strange star appeared, which guided certain Levantine Princes and Sages to the inquiry after him; a strange star, which had an irregular place and an irregular motion, that came by design, and acted by counsel, the counsel of the almighty Guide, it moved from place to place, till it stood just over the house where the Babe did sleep; a star, of which the Heathen knew much, who knew nothing of him; a star, which *Chalcidius* affirmed to have signified the descent of God for the salvation of man; a star, that guided the wise Chaldees to worship him with gifts (as the same disciple of *Plato* does affirm, and) as the holy Scriptures deliver; and this star could be no secret; it troubled all the country; it put *Herod* upon strange arts of security for his Kingdom, it effected a sad tragedy accidentally, for it occasioned the death of all the little

Babes in the City, and voifinage of *Bethlehem*: but the birth of this young child, which was thus glorified by a ftar, was alfo fignified by an Angel, and was effected by the holy Spirit of God, in a manner which was in itfelf fupernatural; a Virgin was his Mother, and God was his Father, and his beginning was miraculous; and this matter of his birth of a Virgin was proved to an interefted and jealous perfon, even to *Joseph*, the fupposed father of *Jesus*; it was affirmed publicly by all his family, and by all his difciples, and publifhed in the midft of all his enemies, who by no artifice could reprove it; a matter fo famous, that when it was urged as an argument to prove *Jesus* to be the *Meffias*, by the force of a Prophecy in *Isaiah* [*A Virgin fhall conceive a Son*], they who obftinately refufed to admit him, did not deny the matter of fact, but denied that it was fo meant by the Prophet, which, if it were true, can only prove that *Jesus* was more excellent than was foretold by the Prophets, but that there was nothing lefs in him than was to be in the *Meffias*; it

was a matter so famous, that the Arabian Physicians, who can affirm no such things of their Mahomet, and yet not being able to deny it to be true of the holy Jesus, endeavour to elevate and lessen the thing, by saying, It is not wholly beyond the force of nature, that a Virgin should conceive; so that it was on all hands undeniable, that the Mother of Jesus was a Virgin, a Mother without a Man.

This is that Jesus, at whose presence, before he was born, a babe in his mother's belly also did leap for joy, who was also a person extraordinary himself, conceived in his mother's old age, after a long barrenness, signified by an Angel in the Temple, to his father officiating his priestly office, who was also struck dumb for his not present believing: all the people saw it, and all his kindred were witnesses of his restitution, and he was named by the Angel, and his office declared to be the fore-runner of the holy Jesus; and this also was foretold by one of the old Prophets; for the whole story of this Divine person is a chain of providence and wonder, every link of which

which is a verification of a Prophecy, and all of it is that thing which, from *Adam* to the birth of *Jesus*, was pointed at and hinted by all the Prophets, whose words in him passed perfectly into the event.

This is that *Jesus*, who, as he was born without a Father, so he was learned without a Master; he was a Man without age, a Doctor in a Child's garment, disputing in the Sanctuary at twelve years old. He was a sojourner in *Egypt*, because the poor Babe, born of an indigent Mother, was a formidable rival to a potent King; and this fear could not come from the design of the infant, but must needs arise from the illustriousness of the birth, and the Prophecies of the child, and the sayings of the learned, and the journey of the wise men, and the decrees of God; this journey and the return were both managed by the conduct of an Angel and a Divine dream, for to the Son of God all the Angels did rejoice to minister.

This blessed Person, made thus excellent by his Father, and glorious by miraculous conignations, and illustrious by the
ministry

ministry of heavenly spirits, and proclaimed to *Mary* and to *Joseph* by two Angels, to the Shepherds by a multitude of the heavenly Host, to the Wise men by a Prophecy^d and by a Star, to the Jews by the Shepherds, to the Gentiles by the three Wise men, to *Herod* by the Doctors of the Law, and to himself perfectly known by the inhabiting his human nature in the bosom and heart of God, and by the fulness of the Spirit of God, was yet pleased for thirty years together to live an humble, a laborious, a chaste and a devout, a regular and an even, a wise and an exemplar, a pious and an obscure life, without complaint, without sin, without design of fame, or grandeur of spirit, till the time came that the clefts of the rock were to open, and the Diamond give its lustre, and be worn in the Diadems of Kings, and then this person was wholly admirable; for he was ushered into the world by the voice of a loud Crier in the wilderness, a person austere and wise, of a strange life, full of holiness and full of hardness, and a great

^c Psal. lxxii. 10, 11.

Preacher of righteousness, a man believed by all the people that he came from God, one who in his own nation gathered disciples publicly, and (which amongst them was a great matter) he was the Doctor of a new institution, and baptized all the Country; yet this man, so great, so revered, so followed, so listened to by King and people, by Doctors and by idiots, by Pharisees and Sadducees, this man preached Jesus to the people, pointed out the Lamb of God, told that he must increase, and himself from all that fame must retire to give him place; he received him to baptism, after having with duty and modesty declared his own unworthiness to give, but rather a worthiness to receive baptism from the holy hands of Jesus; but at the solemnity God sent down the holy Spirit upon his holy Son, and by a voice from heaven, a voice of thunder (and God was in that voice) declared that this was his Son, and that he was delighted in him.

This voice from heaven was such, so evident, so certain a conviction of what it did intend to prove, so known and accepted

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ed as the way of Divine revelation under the second Temple, that at that time every man that desired a sign honestly, would have been satisfied with such a voice; it being the testimony, by which God made all extraordinaries to be credible to his people, from the days of *Ezra*, to the death of the Nation; and that there was such a voice, not only then, but divers times after, was as certain, and made as evident, as things of that nature can ordinarily be made. For it being a matter of fact, cannot be supposed infinite, but limited to time and place, heard by a certain number of persons, and was as a clap of thunder upon ordinary accounts, which could be heard but by those who were within the sphere of its own activity; and reported by those to others, who are to give testimony, as testimonies are required, which are credible under the test of two or three disinterested, honest, and true men; and, though this was done in the presence of more, and oftener than once, yet it was a divine testimony but at first, but is to be conveyed by the means of men; and,

and, as God thundered from heaven at the giving of the Law (though that he did so, we have notice only from the Books of *Moses*, received from the Jewish nation), so he did in the days of the *Baptist*, and so he did to *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, and so he did in the presence of the *Pharisees* and many of the common people; and, as it is not to be supposed that all these would join their divided interests, for and against themselves, for the verification of a lie; so, if they would have done it, they could not have done it without reproof of their own parties, who would have been glad by the discovery only to disgrace the whole story. But, if the report of honest and just men so reputed, may be questioned for matter of fact, or may not be accounted sufficient to make faith, when there is no pretence of men to the contrary, besides, that we can have no story transmitted to us, no records kept, no acts of Courts, no narratives of the days of old, no traditions of our Fathers; so there could not be left in nature any usual instrument, whereby God could after the manner of
men

men declare his own will to us, but either we should never know the will of heaven upon earth, or it must be, that God must not only tell it *once* but *always*, and not only *always to some men*, but *always to all men*; and then, as there would be no use of history, or the honesty of men, and their faithfulness in telling any act of God in declaration of his will, so there would be perpetual necessity of miracles, and we could not serve God directly with our understanding; for there would be no such thing as faith, that is, of assent without conviction of understanding, and we could not please God with believing, because there would be in it nothing of the will, nothing of love and choice; and that faith which is, would be like that of *Thomas*, to believe what we see or hear, and God should not at all govern upon earth, unless he did continually come himself: for thus, all Government, all Teachers, all Apostles, all Messengers would be needless, because they could not shew to the eye what they told to the ears of men; and it might as well be disbelieved in all Courts and by all Princes, that this

was

was not the letter of a Prince, or the act of a man, or the writing of his hand, and so all human intercourse must cease, and all senses, but the eye, be useless as to this affair, or else to the ear all voices must be strangers but the principal, if, I say, no reports shall make faith. But it is certain, that when these voices were sent from heaven and heard upon earth, they prevailed amongst many that heard them not, and disciples were multiplied upon such accounts; or else it must be that none, that did hear them, could be believed by any of their friends and neighbours; for, if they were, the voice was as effective at the reflex and rebound, as in the direct emission, and could prevail with them that believed their brother or their friend, as certainly as with them that believed their own ears and eyes.

I need not speak of the vast numbers of miracles which he wrought; miracles, which were not more demonstrations of his power, than of his mercy; for they had nothing of pompousness and ostentation, but infinitely of charity and mercy, and
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that *permanent* and *lasting* and *often*: he opened the eyes of the blind, he made the crooked straight; he made the weak strong, he cured fevers with the touch of his hand, and an issue of blood with the hem of his garment, and sore eyes with the spittle of his mouth and the clay of the earth; he multiplied the loaves and fishes, he raised the dead to life, a *young maiden*, the widow's son of *Naim*, and *Lazarus*, and cast out Devils by the word of his mouth, which he could never do, but by the power of God. For Satan does not cast out Satan, nor a house fight against itself, if it means to stand long; and the Devil could not help Jesus, because the holy Jesus taught men virtue, called them from the worshipping Devils, taught them to resist the Devil, to lay aside all those abominable idolatries by which the Devil doth rule in the hearts of men: he taught men to love God, to fly from temptations to sin, to hate and avoid all those things of which the Devil is guilty; for Christianity forbids pride, envy, malice, lying, and yet affirms that the Devil is proud, envious, malicious,

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and the Father of lies ; and therefore, wherever Christianity prevails, the Devil is not worshipped, and therefore, he that can think that a man without the power of God could overturn the Devil's principles, cross his designs, weaken his strengths, baffle him in his policies, befool him and turn him out of possession, and make him open his own mouth against himself, as he did often, and confess himself conquered by Jesus, and tormented, as the Oracle did to *Augustus Caesar*, and the Devil to *Jesus* himself ; he, I say, that thinks a mere man can do this, knows not the weaknesses of a man, nor the power of an Angel ; but he that thinks this could be done by compact, and by consent of the Devil, must think him to be an Intelligence without understanding, a power without force, a fool and a sot to assist a power against himself, and to persecute the power he did assist, to stir up the world to destroy the Christians, whose Master and Lord he did assist to destroy himself ; and, when we read that *Porphyrus* ^e an Heathen, a professed enemy to Christianity, did say,

^e Euseb. lib. v. c. 1. Præp. Evang.

Ἰησοῦ τιμωμένῃ τὶς θεῶν δημοσίας ὠφελείας ἐκ ἡθελῶ,
 that since Jesus was worshipped, the gods
 could help no man, that is, the gods which
 they worshipped; the poor baffled enervated
 Dæmons: he must either think that the
 Devils are as foolish as they are weak, or
 else, that they did nothing towards this de-
 clination of their power; and therefore that
 they suffer it by a power higher than them-
 selves, that is, by the power of God in the
 hand of Jesus.

But, besides that God gave testimony
 from heaven concerning him, he also gave
 this testimony of himself to have come from
 God, because that *he did God's will*; for
 he that is a good man and lives by the
 Laws of God and of his Nation, a life in-
 nocent and simple, prudent and wise, holy
 and spotless, unproved and unsuspected,
 he is certainly by all wise men said in a
 good sense to be the son of God; but he
 who does well and speaks well, and calls all
 men to glorify and serve God, and serves
 no ends but of holiness and charity, of
 wisdom of hearts and reformation of man-
 ners, this man carries great authority in his
 sayings,

fayings, and ought to prevail with good men in good things, for good ends, which is all that is here required.

But his nature was so sweet, his manners so humble, his words so wise and composed, his comportment so grave and winning, his answers so seasonable, his questions so deep, his reproof so severe and charitable, his pity so great and merciful, his preachings so full of reason and holiness, of weight and authority, his conversation so useful and beneficent, his poverty great but his alms frequent, his family so holy and religious, his and their employment so profitable, his meekness so incomparable, his passions without difference, save only were zeal or pity carried him on to worthy and apt expressions, a person that never laughed, but often wept in a sense of the calamities of others ; he loved every man and hated no man, he gave counsel to the doubtful, and instructed the ignorant, he bound up the broken hearts, and strengthened the feeble knees, he relieved the poor, and converted the sinners, he despised none that came to him for relief,
and

and as for those that did not, he went to them; he took all occasions of mercy that were offered him, and went abroad for more; he spent his days in Preaching and healing, and his nights in Prayers and conversation with God; he was obedient to Laws and subject to Princes, though he was the Prince of *Judæa* in right of his Mother, and of all the world in right of his Father; the people followed him, but he made no conventions; and when they were made, he suffered no tumults; when they would have made him a King, he withdrew himself; when he knew they would put him to death, he offered himself; he knew mens hearts, and conversed secretly, and gave answer to their thoughts and prevented their questions; he would work a miracle rather than give offence, and yet suffer every offence rather than see God his Father dishonoured; he exactly kept the Law of Moses, to which he came to put a period, and yet chose to signify his purpose only by doing acts of mercy upon their Sabbath, doing nothing which they could call a breach of a Command-

ment, but healing sick people, a charity, which themselves would do to beasts, and yet they were angry at him for doing it to their brethren.

In all his life, and in all his conversation with his nation, he was innocent as an Angel of light ; and when, by the greatness of his worth, and the severity of his doctrine, and the charity of his miracles, and the noises of the people, and his immense fame in all that part of the world, and the multitude of his disciples, and the authority of his Sermons, and his free reproof of their hypocrisy, and his discovery of their false doctrines and weak traditions, he had branded the reputation of the vicious rulers of the people, and they resolved to put him to death, they who had the biggest malice in the world, and the weakest accusations, were forced to supply their want of articles against him by making truth to be his fault, and his office to be his crime, and his open confession of what was asked him to be his article of condemnation ; and yet after all this they could not persuade the competent Judge to condemn him,

him, or to find him guilty of any fault, and therefore they were forced to threaten him with *Cæsar's* name, against whom then they would pretend him to be an enemy, though in their charge they neither proved, nor indeed laid it against him; and yet to whatsoever they objected he made no return, but his silence and his innocence were remarkable and evident, without labour and reply, and needed no more argument, than the Sun needs an advocate to prove, that he is the brightest star in the firmament.

Well, so it was, they crucified him; and, when they did, they did as much put out the eye of heaven, as destroy the Son of God; for, when with an incomparable sweetness, and a patience exemplar to all ages of sufferers, he endured affronts, examinations, scorns, insolencies of rude ungente Tradesmen, cruel whippings, injurious, unjust, and unreasonable usages from those whom he obliged by all the arts of endearment and offers of the biggest kindness, at last he went to death, as to the work which God appointed him, that he

might become the world's sacrifice, and the great example of holiness, and the instance of representing by what way the world was to be made happy [even by sufferings and so entering into heaven]; that he might (I say) become the Saviour of his Enemies, and the elder Brother to his friends, and the Lord of Glory, and the fountain of its emanation. Then it was, that God gave new testimonies from heaven: the Sun was eclipsed all the while he was upon the Cross, and yet the moon was in the full; that is, he lost his light, not because any thing in nature did invest him, but because the God of nature (as a Heathen at that very time confessed, who yet saw nothing of this sad iniquity) did suffer. The rocks did rend, the veil of the Temple divided of itself and opened the inclosures, and disparted the Sanctuary, and made it pervious to the Gentiles eye; the dead arose, and appeared in *Jerusalem* to their friends, the Centurion and divers of the people smote their hearts, and were by these strange indications convinced that he was the Son of God. His garments were parted, and lots cast upon
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his inward coat, they gave him vinegar and gall to drink, they brake not a bone of him, but they pierced his side with a spear, looking upon him whom they had pierced; according to the Prophecies of him, which were so clear and descended to minutes and circumstances of his passion, that there was nothing left by which they could doubt whether this were he or no who was to come into the world: but after all this, that all might be finally verified, and no scruple left, after three days burial, a great stone being rolled to the face of the grave, and the stone sealed, and a guard of soldiers placed about it, he arose from the grave, and for forty days together conversed with his followers and Disciples, and beyond all suspicion was seen of five hundred Brethren at once, which is a number too great to give their consent and testimony to a lie, and, it being so publicly and confidently affirmed at the very time it was done, and for ever after urged by all Christians, used as the most mighty demonstration, proclaimed, preached, talked of, even upbraided to the gainsayers,

affirmed

affirmed by eye-witnesses, persuaded to the kindred and friends and the relatives and companions of all those five hundred persons who were eye-witnesses, it is infinitely removed from a reasonable suspicion; and at the end of those days was taken up into heaven in the sight of many of them, as *Elias* was in the presence of *Elisba*.

Now he, of whom all these things are true, must needs be more than a mere man; and, that they were true, was affirmed by very many eye-witnesses, men, who were innocent, plain men, men that had no bad ends to serve; men, that looked for no preferment by the thing in this life; men, to whom their Master told they were to expect not Crowns and Sceptres, not praise of men or wealthy possessions, not power and ease, but a voluntary casting away care and attendance upon secular affairs, that they might attend their Ministry; poverty and prisons, trouble and vexation, persecution and labour, whippings and banishment, bonds and death; and for a reward they must stay till a good day came, but that was not to be at all in
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this world ; and, when the day of restitution and recompense should come, they should never know till it came, but upon the hope of this and the faith of Jesus, and the word of God so taught, so consigned, they must rely wholly and for ever.

Now let it be considered, how could matters of fact be proved better? and how could this be any thing, but such as to rely upon matters of fact? what greater certainty can we have of any thing that was ever done which we saw not, or heard not, but by the report of wise and honest persons? especially, since they were such whose life and breeding was so far from ambition and pompousness, that, as they could not naturally and reasonably hope for any great number of Profelytes, so the fame that could be hoped for amongst them, as it must be a matter of their own procuring, and consequently uncertain, so it must needs be very inconsiderable, not fit to outweigh the danger and the loss, nor yet at all valuable by them whose education and pretences were against it? These we have plentifully. But if these men are numerous
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and united, it is more. Then we have more ; for so many did affirm these things which they saw and heard, that thousands of people were convinced of the truth of them : but then, if these men offer their oath, it is yet more, but yet not so much as we have, for they sealed those things with their blood ; they gave their life for a testimony ; and what reward can any man expect, if he gives his life for a lie ? who shall make him recompense, or what can tempt him to do it knowingly ? but, after all, it is to be remembered, that as God hates lying, so he hates incredulity ; as we must not believe a lie, so neither stop up our eyes and ears against truth ; and what we do every minute of our lives in matters of little and of great concernment, if we refuse to do in our Religion, which yet is to be conducted as other human affairs are, by human instruments and arguments of persuasion, proper to the nature of the thing, it is an obstinacy, that is as contrary to human reason, as it is to Divine faith.

These things relate to the PERSON of the *holy Jesus*, and prove sufficiently that it was
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extraordinary, that it was *divine*, that *God was with him*, that his power wrought in him; and therefore that it was his will which Jesus taught, and God signed. But then if nothing of all this had been, yet even the doctrine itself proves itself *Divine* and to come from God.

II.

Considerations respecting the DOCTRINE
of Jesus Christ.

FOR it is a Doctrine perfective of human nature, that teaches us to love God and to love one another, to hurt no man, and to do good to every man; it propines^f to us the noblest, the highest, and the bravest pleasures of the world; the joys of charity, the rest of innocence, the peace of quiet spirits, the wealth of beneficence, and forbids us only to be beasts and to be Devils; it allows all that God and nature intended, and only restrains the excrescencies of na-

^f *Propines*] An elegant word, not now in use. It is from the Latin verb, *propinare*, and means to *offer in kindness*, as when we drink to any one, and present the cup to him, to drink after us.

ture,

ture, and forbids us to take pleasure in that which is the only entertainment of Devils, in murders and revenges, malice and spiteful words and actions; it permits corporal pleasures, where they can best minister to health and societies, to conservation of families and honour of Communities; it teaches men to keep their words, that themselves may be secured in all their just interests, and to do good to others, that good may be done to them; it forbids biting one another, that we may not be devoured by one another; and commands obedience to superiors, that we may not be ruined in confusion; it combines governments, and confirms all good Laws, and makes peace, and opposes and prevents wars where they are not just, and where they are not necessary. It is a Religion that is life and spirit, not consisting in ceremonies and external amusements, but in the services of the heart, and the real fruit of lips and hands, that is, of good words and good deeds; it bids us to do that to God which is agreeable to his excellencies, that is, worship him with the best thing we have, and make all things

things else minister to it; it bids us do that to our neighbour, by which he may be better: it is the perfection of the natural Law, and agreeable to our natural necessities, and promotes our natural ends and designs: it does not destroy reason, but instructs it in very many things, and complies with it in all; it hath in it both *heat* and *light*, and is not more effectual than it is beauteous; it promises every thing that we can desire, and yet promises nothing but what it does effect; it proclaims war against all vices, and generally does command every virtue; it teaches us with ease to mortify those affections which reason durst scarce reprove, because she hath not strength enough to conquer; and it does create in us those virtues which reason of herself never knew, and after they are known, could never approve sufficiently: it is a doctrine, in which nothing is superfluous or burdensome; nor yet is there any thing wanting, which can procure happiness to mankind, or by which God can be glorified: and, if wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and simplicity, and holiness, and
purity,

purity, and meekness, and contentedness, and charity, be images of God and rays of Divinity, then that Doctrine, in which all these shine so gloriously, and in which nothing else is ingredient, must needs be from God; and that all this is true in the Doctrine of Jesus needs no other probation, but the reading the words.

For, that the words of Jesus are contained in the Gospels, that is, in the writings of them who were eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the actions and Sermons of Jesus, is not at all to be doubted; for in every sect we believe their own records of Doctrine and institution: for it is madness to suppose the Christians to pretend to be servants of the Laws of Jesus, and yet to make a Law of their own which he made not: no man doubts but that the Alcoran is the Law of Mahomet, that the Old Testament contains the Religion of the Jews; and the authority of these Books is proved by all the arguments of the Religion, for all the arguments persuading to the Religion are intended to prove no other, than is contained in those Books; and,

and, these having been for fifteen hundred years and more, received absolutely by all Christian assemblies, if any man shall offer to make a question of their authority, he must declare his reasons, for the disciples of the Religion have sufficient presumption, security and possession, till they can be reasonably disturbed; but, that now they can never be, is infinitely certain, because we have a long, immemorial, universal tradition that these books were written in those times, by those men whose names they bear, they were accepted by all Churches at the very first notice, except some few of the later, which were first received by some Churches, and then consented to by all; they were acknowledged by the same, and by the next age for genuine, their authority published, their words cited, appeals made to them in all questions of Religion, because it was known and confessed that they wrote nothing but that they knew, so that they were not deceived; and to say, they would lie, must be made to appear by something extrinsical to this inquiry, and was never so much as plausibly
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pretended by any adversaries, and it being a matter of another man's will, must be declared by actions, or not at all.

But, besides, the men, that wrote them, were to be believed, because they did Miracles, they wrote Prophecies, which are verified by the event, persons were cured at their Sepulchres, a thing so famous that it was confessed even by the enemies of the Religion: and, after all, that which the world ought to rely upon, is the wisdom and the providence and the goodness of God; all which it concerned to take care that the Religion, which himself so adorned and proved by miracles and mighty signs, should not be lost, nor any false writings be obtruded instead of true, lest, without our fault, the will of God become impossible to be obeyed.

But to return to the thing: all those excellent things, which singly did make famous so many sects of Philosophers, and remarked so many Princes of their sects, all them united, and many more, which their eyes, ὀφθαλμα νοητέδων, dark and dim, could not see, are heaped together in this system

system of wisdom and holiness. Here, are plain precepts full of deepest mystery; here, are the measures of holiness and approaches to God described; obedience and conformity, mortification of the body, and elevations of the spirit, abstractions from earth, and arts of society and union with heaven, degrees of excellencies, and tendencies to perfection, imitations of God, and conversations with him; these are the heights and descents, upon the plain grounds of natural reason, and natural religion; for there is nothing commanded but what our reason by nature ought to choose, and yet nothing of natural reason taught but what is heightened and made more perfect by the Spirit of God; and, when there is any thing in the Religion, that is against flesh and blood, it is only when flesh and blood is against us, and against reason, when flesh and blood either would hinder us from great felicity, or bring us into great misery: to conclude, it is such a Law, that nothing can hinder men to receive and entertain, but a pertinacious baseness, and love to vice, and none

can receive it but those who resolve to be good and excellent; and, if the holy Jesus had come into the world with less splendor of power and mighty demonstrations, yet, even the excellency of what he taught, makes him alone fit to be the Master of the world.

III.

Considerations respecting the EFFECT, and the INSTRUMENTS, of Christ's Religion.

BUT then let us consider what this excellent person did effect, and with what instruments he brought so great things to pass. He was to put a period to the Rites of *Moses*, and the Religion of the Temple, of which the Jews were zealous even unto pertinacy; to reform the manners of all mankind, to confound the wisdom of the Greeks, to break in pieces the power of the Devil, to destroy the worship of all false Gods, to pull down their Oracles, and change their Laws, and by principles wise and holy to reform the false discourses of the world.

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But see what was to be taught, A Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead, $\tau\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha \ \epsilon\nu \ \kappa\epsilon \ \epsilon\nu \ \tau\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ that is the Christian arithmetick, *Three are one, and one are three*, so *Lucian* in his *Philopatris*, or some other, derides the Christian Doctrine; see their Philosophy, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. No: *Ex nihilo omnia*, all things are made of nothing; and a *Man-God* and a *God-Man*, the same person finite and infinite, born in time, and yet from all eternity the Son of God, but yet born of a Woman, and she a Maid, but yet a Mother; resurrection of the dead, re-union of soul and body; this was part of the Christian Physicks or their natural Philosophy.

But then certainly “their moral was easy and delicious.” It is so indeed, but not to flesh and blood, whose appetites it pretends to regulate or to destroy, to restrain or else to mortify: *fasting* and *penance*, and *humility*, *loving our enemies*, *restitution of injuries*, and *self-denial*, and *taking up the Cross*, and *losing all our goods*, and *giving our life for Jesus*: as the other was hard to believe, so this is as hard to do.

But for whom and under whose conduct was all this to be believed, and all this to be done, and all this to be suffered? Surely, for some glorious and mighty Prince, whose splendor as far outshines the Roman Empire, as the jewels of Cleopatra outshined the swaddling clothes of the Babe at *Bethlehem*. No, it was not so neither. For all this was for *Jesus*, whom his followers preached; a poor Babe, born in a stable, the son of a Carpenter, cradled in a cratch, swaddled in poor clouts; it was for him whom they indeed called a God, but yet whom all the world knew, and they themselves said, was whipped at a post, nailed to a Cross; he fell under the malice of the Jews his Countrymen, and the power of his Roman Lords, a cheap and a pitiful sacrifice, without beauty and without splendor.

The DESIGN is great, but does not yet seem possible; but therefore let us see what INSTRUMENTS the Holy Jesus chose, to effect these so mighty changes, to persuade so many propositions, to endear so great sufferings, to overcome so great enemies, to
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master so many impossibilities which *this* Doctrine and *this* Law from *this* Master were sure to meet withal.

Here, here it is that the Divinity of the power is proclaimed. When a man goes to war, he raises as great an Army as he can to out-number his enemy; but, when God fights, three hundred men, that lap like a dog, are sufficient; nay, one word can dissolve the greatest army. He that means to effect any thing must have means of his own proportionable; and if they be not, he must fail, or derive them from the mighty. See then with what instruments the holy Jesus sets upon this great reformation of the world.

Twelve men of obscure and poor birth, of contemptible trades and quality, without learning, without breeding; these men were sent into the midst of a knowing and wise world, to dispute with the most famous Philosophers of *Greece*, to out-wit all the learning of *Athens*, to out-preach all the Roman Orators; to introduce into a newly-settled Empire, which would be impatient of novelties and change, such a change as

must destroy all their Temples, or remove thence all their gods: against which change all the zeal of the world, and all the passions, and all the seeming pretences which they could make, must needs be violently opposed: a change, that introduced new Laws, and caused them to reverse the old, to change that Religion under which their Fathers long did prosper, and under which the Roman Empire obtained so great a grandeur, for a Religion, which in appearance was silly and humble, meek and peaceable, not apt indeed to do harm, but exposing men to all the harm in the world, abating their courage, blunting their swords, teaching peace and unactiveness, and making the soldiers arms in a manner useless, and untying their military girdle: a Religion, which contradicted their reasons of State, and erected new Judicatories, and made the Roman Courts to be silent and without causes; a Religion, that gave countenance to the poor and pitiful (but in a time when riches were adored, and ambition esteemed the greatest nobleness, and pleasure thought to be the chiefest good)

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it brought no peculiar blessing to the rich or mighty, unless they would become poor and humble in some real sense or other ; a Religion, that would change the face of things, and would also pierce into the secrets of the soul, and unravel all the intrigues of hearts, and reform all evil manners, and break vile habits into gentleness and counsel : that such a Religion in such a time, preached by such mean persons, should triumph over the Philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the Sermons of the eloquent, and the power of Princes, and the interest of States, and the inclinations of nature, and the blindness of zeal, and the force of custom, and the pleasures of sin, and the busy Arts of the Devil, that is, against wit, and power, and money, and Religion, and wilfulness, and fame, and Empire, which are all the things in the world that can make a thing impossible ; this, I say, could not be by the proper force of such instruments ; for no man can span heaven with an infant's palm, nor govern wise Empires with Diagrams.

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It were impudence to send a footman to command *Cæsar* to lay down his arms, to disband his legions, and throw himself into *Tyber*, or keep a Tavern next to *Pompey's* Theatre; but, if a sober man shall stand alone, unarmed, undefended, or unprovided, and shall tell that he will make the Sun stand still, or remove a mountain, or reduce *Xerxes's* Army to the scantling of a single Troop, he that believes he will and can do this, must believe he does it by a higher power, than he can yet perceive; and so it was in the present transaction. For that the holy Jesus made invisible powers to do him visible honours, that his Apostles hunted the Dæmons from their Tripods, their Navels, their Dens, their hollow Pipes, their Temples, and their Altars; that he made the Oracles silent, as *Lucian*, *Porphyry*, *Celsus*, and other Heathens confess; that, against the order of new things, which let them be never so profitable or good do yet suffer reproach, and cannot prevail unless they commence in a time of advantage and favour; yet, that this should flourish like the Palm by pressure, grow glorious

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by

by opposition, thrive by persecution, and was demonstrated by objections, argues a higher cause than the immediate instrument. Now how this higher cause did intervene, is visible and notorious: the apostles were not learned, but the holy Jesus promised that he would send down wisdom from above, from the Father of spirits; they had no power, but they should be invested with power from on high; they were *ignorant* and *timorous*, but he would make them *learned* and *confident*, and so he did: he promised that in a few days he would send the holy Ghost upon them, and he did so; after ten days they felt and saw glorious immission from heaven, lights of moveable fire sitting upon their heads, and that light did illuminate their hearts, and the mighty rushing wind inspired them with a power of speaking divers languages, and brought to their remembrances all that Jesus did and taught, and made them wise to conduct souls, and bold to venture, and prudent to advise, and powerful to do miracles, and witty to convince gainsayers, and hugely instructed in the Scriptures, and gave

gave them the spirit of Government, and the spirit of Prophecy.

This thing was so public, that at the first notice of it three thousand souls were converted on that very day, at the very time when it was done; for it was certainly a visible demonstration of an invisible power, that ignorant persons, who were never taught, should in an instant speak all the languages of the Roman Empire; and indeed this thing was so necessary to be so, and so certain that it was so, so public and so evident, and so reasonable, and so useful, that it is not easy to say whether it was the indication of a greater power, or a greater wisdom; and now the means was proportionable enough to the biggest end: without learning, they could not confute the learned world; but therefore God became their Teacher: without power, they could not break the Devil's violence, but therefore God gave them power: without courage, they could not contest against all the violence of the Jews and Gentiles; but therefore God was their strength, and gave them fortitude: without great caution and
provi-

providence, they could not avoid the traps of crafty persecutors ; but therefore God gave them caution, and made them provident, and, as *Beseleel* and *Aboliab* received the spirit of God, the spirit of understanding to enable them to work excellently in the Tabernacle, so had the Apostles to make them wise for the work of God and the Ministries of this Diviner Tabernacle, *which God pitched, not man.*

Immediately upon this, the Apostles, to make a fulness of demonstration and an undeniable conviction, gave the spirit to others also, to *Jews* and *Gentiles* and to the men of *Samaria*, and they spake with tongues and prophesied ; then they preached to all Nations, and endured all persecutions, and cured all diseases, and raised the dead to life, and were brought before Tribunals, and confessed the Name of Jesus, and convinced the blasphemous Jews out of their own Prophets, and not only prevailed upon women and weak men, but even upon the bravest and wisest. All the disciples of *John the Baptist*, the *Nazarens* and *Ebionites*, *Nicodemus* and *Joseph of Arimathea*,

Arimathea, *Sergius* the President, *Dionysius* an *Athenian* Judge, and *Polycarpus*, *Justinus* and *Irenæus*, *Athenagoras* and *Origen*, *Tertullian* and *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, who could not be such fools as, upon a matter not certainly true but probably false, to unravel their former principles, and to change their liberty for a Prison, wealth for poverty, honour for disreputation, life for death, if by such exchange they had not been secured of truth and holiness and the will of God.

But, above all these, was SAUL, a bold and a witty, a zealous and learned young man, who, going with letters to persecute the Christians of *Damascus*, was by a light from heaven called from his furious march, reproved by God's Angel for persecuting the cause of Jesus, was sent to the City, baptized by a Christian Minister, instructed and sent abroad; and he became the prodigy of the world, for learning and zeal, for preaching and writing, for labour and sufferance, for government and wisdom; he was admitted to see the holy Jesus after the Lord was taken into heaven, he was
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taken up into Paradise, he conversed with Angels, he saw unspeakable rays of glory; and besides that himself said it, who had no reason to lie, who would get nothing by it here but a conjugation of troubles, and who should get nothing by it hereafter if it were false; besides this, I say, that he did all those acts of zeal and obedience for the promotion of the Religion, does demonstrate he had reason extraordinary for so sudden a change, so strange a labour, so frequent and incomparable sufferings: and therefore, as he did and suffered so much upon such glorious motives, so he spared not to publish it to all the world, he spake it to Kings and Princes, he told it to the envious Jews; he had partners of his journey, who were witnesses of the miraculous accident; and in his publication he urged the notorioufness of the fact, as a thing not feigned, not private, but done at noon-day under the test of competent persons; and it was a thing that proved itself, for it was effective of a *present*, a *great*, and a *permanent* change.

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But now it is no new wonder, but a pursuance of the same conjugation of great and Divine things, that the Fame and Religion of Jesus was with so incredible a swiftness scattered over the face of the habitable world, from one end of the earth unto the other; it filled all *Asia* immediately, it passed presently to *Europe*, and to the furthest *Africans*; and all the way it went it told nothing but an holy and an humble story, that he who came to bring it into the world, died an ignominious death, and yet this death did not take away their courage, but added much: for they could not fear death for that Master, whom they knew to have for their sakes suffered death, and came to life again. But now infinite numbers of persons of all sexes, and all ages, and all countries, came in to the *Holy Crucifix*; and he that was crucified in the reign of *Tiberius*, was in the time of *Nero*, even in *Rome* itself, and in *Nero's* family by many persons esteemed for a God; and it was upon public record that he was so acknowledged; and this was by a Christian, *Justin Martyr*, urged to the Senate,

Senate, and to the Emperors themselves, who if it had been otherwise could easily have confuted the bold allegation of the Christian, who yet did die for that Jesus who was so speedily reputed for a God; the Cross was worn upon breasts, printed in the air, drawn upon foreheads, carried on banners, put upon crowns Imperial; and yet the Christians were sought for to punishments, and exquisite punishments sought forth for them; their goods were confiscate, their names odious, prisons were their houses, and so many kinds of tortures invented for them that *Domitius Ulpianus* hath spent seven Books in describing the variety of tortures the poor Christian was put to at his first appearing; and yet, in despite of all this, and ten thousand other objections and impossibilities, whatsoever was for them made the Religion grow, and whatsoever was against them made it grow; if they had peace, the Religion was prosperous; if they had persecution, it was still prosperous: if Princes favoured them, the world came in, because the Christians lived holily; if Princes were incensed, the

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world

world came in, because the Christians died bravely. They fought for death with greediness, they desired to be grinded in the teeth of lions; and with joy they beheld the wheels and the bended trees, the racks and the gibbets, the fires and the burning irons, which were like the chair of *Elias* to them, instruments to carry them to heaven, into the bosom of their beloved Jesus.

Who would not acknowledge the Divinity of this person, and the excellency of this institution, that should see infants to weary the hands of hangmen for the testimony of Jesus; and wise men preach this doctrine for no other visible reward, but shame and death, poverty and banishment? and hangmen converted by the blood of Martyrs, springing upon their faces, which their impious hands and cords have strained through their flesh? who would not have confessed the honour of Jesus, when he should see miracles done at the tombs of Martyrs, and Devils tremble at the mention of the name of Jesus, and the world running to the honour of the poor *Nazarene*, and kings and queens kissing the
feet

feet of the poor servants of Jesus? could a Jew fisherman and a Publican effect all this, for the son of a poor Maiden of *Judea*? can we suppose all the world, or so great a part of mankind, can consent by chance, or suffer such changes for nothing? or for any thing less than this? The son of the poor Maiden was the son of God: and the fishermen spake by a Divine spirit; and they caught the world with holiness and miracles, with wisdom and power bigger than the strength of all the Roman legions. And what can be added to all this, but this thing alone to prove the Divinity of Jesus? He is a God, or at least is taught by God, who can foretell future contingencies; and so did the holy Jesus, and so did his Disciples.

Our blessed Lord, while he was alive, foretold that after his death his Religion should flourish more than when he was alive: he foretold persecutions to his Disciples; he foretold the mission of the Holy Ghost to be in a very few days after his ascension, which within ten days came to pass; he prophesied that the fact of *Mary*

Magdalen, in anointing the head and feet of her Lord, should be public and known as the Gospel itself, and spoken of in the same place; he foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the signs of its approach, and that it should be by war, and particularly after the manner of Prophets, symbolically, named the Nation should do it, pointing out the Roman eagles; he foretold his death, and the manner of it, and plainly before-hand published his Resurrection, and told them it should be the sign to that generation, *viz.* the great argument to prove him to be the Christ; he prophesied that there should arise false Christs after him, and it came to pass to the extreme great calamity of the nation; and lastly, he foretold that his beloved Disciple *St. John* should tarry upon the earth till his coming again, that is, to his coming to judgment upon *Jerusalem*; and that his Religion should be preached to the Gentiles, that it should be scattered over all the world, and be received by all nations; that it should stay upon the face of the earth till his last coming to judge all the world, and that

that *the gates of hell should not be able to prevail against his Church*; which Prophecy is made good thus long, till this day, and is as a continual argument to justify the Divinity of the Author: the continuance of the Religion helps to continue it, for it proves that it came from God, who foretold that it should continue; and therefore it must continue, because it came from God; and therefore it came from God, because it does and shall for ever continue according to the word of the holy Jesus.

But, after our blessed Lord was entered into glory, the disciples also were Prophets. *Agabus* foretold the dearth that was to be in the Roman Empire in the days of *Claudius Cæsar*, and that *St. Paul* should be bound at *Jerusalem*: *St. Paul* foretold the entering-in of Hereticks into *Asia* after his departure; and he and *St. Peter* and *St. Jude*, and generally the rest of the Apostles, had two great predictions, which they used not only as a verification of the doctrine of Jesus, but as a means to strengthen the hearts of the Disciples, who were so broken with persecution: the one was, that there

should arise a sect of vile men, who should be enemies to religion and government, and cause a great apostacy, which happened notoriously in the sect of the Gnostics, which those three Apostles and St. *John* notoriously and plainly do describe: and the other was, that although the Jewish nation did mightily oppose the religion, it should be but for a while, for they should be destroyed in a short time, and their nation made extremely miserable; but, for the Christians, if they would fly from *Jerusalem* and go to *Pella*, there should not a hair of their head perish: the verification of this Prophecy the Christians extremely longed for, and wondered it staid so long, and began to be troubled at the delay, and suspected all was not well, when the great proof of their Religion was not verified; and, while they were in thoughts of heart concerning it, the sad *Cataclysis* did come, and swept away eleven hundred thousand of the nation; and from that day forward the nation was broken in pieces with intolerable calamities: they are scattered over the face of the earth, and are a vagabond nation,

nation, but yet, like *oil* in a vessel of wine, broken into bubbles but kept in their own circles ; and they shall never be an united people, till they are servants of the holy Jesus ; but shall remain without priest or temple, without altar or sacrifice, without city or country, without the land of Promise, or the promise of a blessing, till our Jesus is their high Priest, and the Shepherd to gather them into his fold : and this very thing is a mighty demonstration against the Jews by their own Prophets ; for when *Isaiab*, and *Jeremiab*, and *Malachi*, had prophesied the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and the change of the old Law, and the introduction of a new by the Messias ; that this was HE, was therefore certain, because he taught the world a new Law, and presently after the publication of this, the old was abrogate, and not only went into desuetude, but into a total abolition among all the world ; and for those of the remnant of the scattered Jews who obstinately blaspheme, the Law is become impossible to them, and they placed in such circumstances, that they need not dispute

concerning its obligation; for it being *external* and *corporal*, *ritual* and at last made also *local*, when the circumstances are impossible, the Law, that was wholly ceremonial and circumstantial, must needs pass away; and when they have lost their Priesthood, they cannot retain the Law, as no man takes care to have his beard shaved, when his head is off.

And it is a wonder to consider how the anger of God is gone out upon that miserable people, and that so great a blindness is fallen upon them; it being evident and notorious that the Old Testament was nothing but a shadow and umbrage of the New; that the Prophecies of that are plainly verified in this; that all the predictions of the Messias are most undeniably accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, so that they cannot with any plausibleness or colour be turned any other way, and be applied to any other person, although the Jews make illiterate allegations, and prodigious dreams, by which they have fooled themselves for sixteen hundred years together, and still hope without reason, and are confident

confident without revelation, and pursue a shadow while they quit the glorious body; while, in the mean time, the *Christian* prays for his conversion, and is at rest in the truth of Jesus, and hath certain unexpressible confidences and internal lights, clarities of the holy Spirit of God, and loves to the holy Jesus produced in his soul, that he will die when he cannot dispute, and is satisfied and he knows not how, and is sure by comforts, and comforted by the excellency of his belief, which speaks nothing but holiness, and light and reason, and peace and satisfactions infinite, because he is sure that all the world can be happy if they would live by the Religion of Jesus, and that neither societies of men nor single persons can have felicity but by this; and that therefore God, who so decrees to make men happy, hath also decreed that it shall for ever be upon the face of the earth, till the earth itself shall be no more, *Amen.*

IV.

Considerations on the weak PRETENCES
of other Religions.

N o w, if against this vast heap of things any man shall but confront the pretences of any other Religion, and see how they fail both of reason and holiness, of wonder and divinity, how they enter by force, and are kept up by human interests, how ignorant and unholy, how unlearned and pitiful are their pretences; the darkneses of these must add great eminency to the brightness of that.

For the JEWS RELIGION, which came from heaven, is therefore not now to be practised, because it did come from heaven, and was to expire into the Christian, it being nothing but the image of this perfection: and the Jews needed no other argument but this, that God hath made theirs impossible now to be done; for he that ties to ceremonies and outward usages, temples and altars, sacrifices and priests, troublesome and expensive rites and figures of
future

future signification, means that there should be an abode and fixt dwelling, for these are not to be done by an ambulatory people; and therefore, since God hath scattered the people into atoms and crumbs of society, without temple or priest, without sacrifice or altar, without *Urim* or *Thummim*, without prophet or vision, even communicating with them no way but by ordinary providence, it is but too evident, that God hath nothing to do with them in the matter of that Religion; but that it is expired, and no way obligatory to them or pleasing to him, which is become impossible to be acted: whereas, the Christian Religion is as eternal as the soul of a man, and can no more cease than our spirits can die, and can worship upon mountains and caves, in fields and churches, in peace and war, in solitude and society, in persecution and in sun-shine, by night and by day, and be solemnized by clergy and laity in the essential parts of it, and is the perfection of the soul, and the highest reason of man, and the glorification of God.

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But for the HEATHEN RELIGIONS, it is evidently to be seen, that they are nothing but an abuse of the natural inclination which all men have to worship a God, whom because they know not, they guess at in the dark; for that they know there is and ought to be something that hath the care and providence of their affairs. But the body of their Religion is nothing but little arts of governments, and stratagems of Princes, and devices to secure the government of new usurpers, or to make obedience to the Laws sure, by being sacred, and to make the yoke that was not natural, pleasant by something that is. But yet, for the whole body of it, who sees not, that their worshippings could not be sacred, because they were done by something that is impure? They appeased their gods with adulteries and impure mixtures, by such things which *Cato* was ashamed to see, by gluttonous eatings of flesh, and impious drinkings, and they did *litare in humano sanguine*, they sacrificed men and women and children to their *Dæmons*, as is notorious in the rites of *Bacchus Omesta*

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amongst the Greeks, and of *Jupiter*, to whom a Greek and a Greekeſs, a Galatian and a Galateſs, were yearly offered; in the answers of the oracles to *Calchas*, as appears in *Homer* and *Virgil*. Who ſees not, that crimes were warranted by the example of their immortal gods; and that what did diſhonour themſelves, they ſang to the honour of their gods, whom they affirmed to be paſſionate and proud, jealous and revengeful, amorous and luſtful, fearful and impatient, drunken and ſleepy, weary and wounded? that the Religions were made laſting by policy and force, by ignorance, and the force of cuſtom; by the preferring an inveterate error, and loving of a quiet and proſperous evil; by the arguments of pleaſure, and the correſpondencies of ſenſuality; by the fraud of oracles, and the patronage of vices; and becauſe they feared every change as an earthquake, as ſuppoſing overturnings of their old error to be the everſion of their well-eſtabliſhed governments? And it had been ordinarily impoſſible that ever Chriſtianity ſhould have entered, if the nature and excellency

cellency of it had not been such as to enter like rain into a fleece of wool, or the sun into a window, without noise or violence, without emotion and disordering the political constitution, without causing trouble to any man but what his own ignorance or peevishness was pleased to spin out of his own bowels ; but did establish governments, secure obedience, made the laws firm, and the persons of Princes to be sacred ; it did not oppose force by force, nor *strike Princes for justice* ; it defended itself against enemies by patience, and overcame them by kindness ; it was the great instrument of God to demonstrate his power in our weaknesses, and to do good to mankind by the imitation of his excellent goodness.

Lastly, he that considers concerning the Religion and person of MAHOMET ; that he was a vicious person, lustful and tyrannical ; that he propounded incredible and ridiculous propositions to his Disciples ; that it entered by the sword, by blood and violence, by murder and robbery ; that it propounds sensual rewards, and allures to compliance by bribing our basest lusts ;

that it conserves itself by the same means it entered ; that it is unlearned and foolish, against reason, and the discourses of all wise men ; that it did no miracles, and made false Prophecies ; in short, that in the person that founded it, in the article it persuades, in the manner of prevailing, in the reward it offers, it is unholy and foolish and rude: it must needs appear to be void of all pretence ; and that no man of reason can ever be fairly persuaded by arguments, that it is the daughter of God, and came down from heaven.

C O N C L U S I O N.

SINCE therefore there is so nothing to be said for any other Religion, and so very much for Christianity, every one of whose pretences can be proved, as well as the things themselves do require, and as all the world expects such things should be proved ; it FOLLOWS, that the holy Jesus is the Son of God ; that his Religion is commanded by God, and is that way by which

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